



BPN E-News

Autumn, 2016

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1. Introduction

Welcome to our latest BPN E-News edition!

The last few months have been one of busiest periods we can remember in years, with the volume and scale of reform and policy announcements seemingly never ending.

Unfortunately despite the onslaught of change in recent months, more is on the way. Our latest new stories follow. We hope you enjoy the read and welcome your ideas and feedback.

2. Changes to the Planning System

Over the past couple of years, the government has announced a series of changes that substantially change the state's planning system.

In addition the Minister has recently announced the intention to change the EP&A Act, to include aspects of the White Paper that were stalled in Parliament in November 2013.

In making this announcement, the Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes said that the definition for ESD will remain the same; however other changes will be included.

To this end, a series of roundtables with key stakeholders has been announced, where feedback and ideas is being sought. Following this a Draft Exposure Bill is proposed to be released for feedback.

This recent news raises a number of key questions which we are seeking feedback from the department. In the interim, the roundtable forums are being rolled out with little notice. BPN has been invited to attend the roundtables which are being rolled out across NSW, namely:

Upcoming Roundtables: Gosford and Newcastle 16 May, Tamworth, 17 May, Griffith, 18 May, Coffs Harbour, 19 May, Wollongong, 20 May, Dubbo, 23 May, Sydney and Parramatta 24 May.

In response, we are looking for local members or members of affiliate groups who can assist by attending the meetings in regional areas on behalf of BPN. If you may be able to assist, please contact us immediately. We have also contacted the Department to suggest the addition of a roundtable at Lismore/Ballina.

To find out more:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3jiXZGKg16ecmIYNXRmS0F5azQ/view?usp=sharing>

3. Changes to the local councils and local government legislation

As many of you will be aware last Thursday, the government announced the merger of 44 Councils into 19 mega councils, most of which are being controversially forcibly merged.

In addition, a number of pending mergers have been announced, which outcome will follow once legal action is complete. The changes have been particularly contentious following the government's refusal to release key reports and consult properly.

On Thursday, administrators were also appointed, with Councillors and senior council staff dismissed. This has prompted a huge public outcry.

To follow this issue, we recommend following Save our Councils Coalition FB page:
<https://www.facebook.com/saveourcouncils/>

4. The introduction of a new Biodiversity Conservation Act

Draft legislation has recently been released. In its current draft form, the legislation is considered a backward step that will see land clearing effectively increased in rural as well as urban areas in NSW.

The legislation is now on exhibition to 28 June and can be viewed here:
<https://www.landmanagement.nsw.gov.au/simplifying-land-management/>

To assist you in making a submission the EDONSW has prepared an informative overview, highlighting the top 10 concerns in relation to the legislation, which we encourage you to read:
http://www.edonsw.org.au/edo_nsw_top_10_concerns_with_draft_biodiversity_conservation_bill_2016_and_local_land_services_amendment_bill

The EDO will also be running a series of workshops throughout NSW in June to assist communities to engage in the reforms.

A series of workshops has also been organised by NCC in conjunction with TEC, which are being facilitated by Corinne Fisher, BPN's former Convenor and Co-Founder, who many of you know. To find out more and attend these workshops:
<http://www.nature.org.au/campaigns/nature-laws/>

5. Expanding Exempt and Code Complying Development

As part of new set of state priorities, the government is aiming to have 90% of housing applications assessed under the code complying process in order to fast-track development.

This includes plans to incorporate medium density housing as complying development into the SEPP (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 and the introduction of an Inland Code for development to apply west of the Great Dividing Range.

As part of this process, the department exhibited a Discussion Paper earlier this year, seeking feedback on incorporating dual occupancy dwellings, manor homes, townhouses and terraces into the SEPP for Exempt and Complying Development.

The introduction of a new 'Inland Code' was more recently exhibited, which submissions closing last Friday. This code would apply to all council areas west of the Great Dividing Range and see the General and Rural Housing Code provisions no longer apply.

Instead the Inland Code would see the General Exempt Development Code apply to rural lots across NSW, where development could be undertaken without planning or building approval, subject to a set of standards being met. This includes the erection of dwelling houses and farm buildings, as well as grain storage bunkers and silos.

The expansion of code complying development is one of the key issues raising community concerns, along with further changes to the planning system. To this end, we are seeking a meeting with the Department to discuss community concerns.

To view the relevant proposals:

http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7407

http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7373

To keep abreast of general policy news, we recommend following this page:

http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=job_listing&status=consideration

6. New Regional Plans

A number of Regional Plans have been released in recent months. This includes the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Plans.

Current plans on exhibition for feedback include:

- The draft North Coast Regional Plan
- The draft Central West and Orana Regional Plan
- The draft Riverina-Murray Regional Plan

To view the plans and make a submission:

http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=job_listing&status=exhibition

7. Greater Sydney Commission and new District Plans

Following the passing of the Greater Sydney Commission Act in 2015, the commission has commenced operations. Its role is to deliver Sydney's Metropolitan Plan (aka A Plan for Growing Sydney), along with providing the government with strategic advice, and assessing major development and rezoning applications. Notably too, the Commission has the capacity to ensure Councils comply with their obligation to 'give effect' to district and metropolitan plans, whereby the Commission can remove a local council as a 'relevant planning authority'.

The Commission's work for 2016 will focus on the preparation of new District Plans which are required by the Minister to be exhibited by 27 January, 2017.

The introduction of the GSC along with other changes being incorporated into the planning system will see NSW's planning system fundamentally change where local communities have less say in planning decisions.

These changes are designed to support the government's new state priorities.

8. Invitation to BPN Special Event at Parliament House on 1 June, 2016

Our next BPN event will be held at Parliament House on Wednesday, the 1 June, 2016. This time the event will be held in the Parliamentary Theatre and commence at 5:30pm for a 6pm start in order to enable more members and affiliates to attend.

On this occasion, Sarah Hill, the new CEO of Greater Sydney Commission will deliver a presentation explaining the role of the Commission and how community engagement will be managed.

In addition, we will provide a planning update, and have invited a panel of experts to join Ms Hill for a panel discussion, with the opportunity for questions from the audience.

As the legislative changes also impact rural and regional areas, members and members of Affiliate Groups outside greater Sydney are also invited to attend.

Under separate cover, Invitations to the BPN event are being sent out via Eventbrite to members and contact points for affiliate groups. Given seating is limited; entry is by Invitation.

If you'd like to attend this event, and do not receive an Invitation by Tuesday, please let us know and we'll forward an Invitation to you. Once you receive the Invitation, please RSVP through Eventbrite to reserve a place.

9. Papers for BPN Planning Forum held on 17 February, 2016

It was great to see so many people at the February BPN Planning Forum and meet many of new members and affiliates.

Following a successful day, we are delighted to include in this edition, the presentations delivered by Dr Anna Yeatman from the Whitlam Institute, and Bob Meyer AM, Director of Planning at Cox Richardson:

[Presentation by Dr Anna Yeatman, BPN Planning Forum, Feb, 2016](#)

[Presentation by Bob Meyer AM, BPN Planning Forum, Feb, 2016](#)

We'd like to once again thank our special guest the legendary, Jack Mundy and our wonderful speakers and panelists on the day – Louise Boronyak from the Institute for Sustainable Futures at UTS, Lucy Cole-Edelstein, Director, Straight Talk, Sue Higginson, CEO, EDONSW, Craig Johnson from Shelter NSW, Architect Philip Thalys and Suzette Meade, President of the North Parramatta Residents Action Group.

10. Welcome to New Members and Affiliate Groups

A big welcome to new members and affiliate groups.

BPN Membership is now open to affiliate groups, who would like to become more actively involved and also have voting rights at the next Annual General Meeting later this year. Membership fees are \$40 for groups with under 40 members; \$70 for groups between 40 to 99 members and \$100 for larger groups.

If your organisation would like to become a member, please email us, and we'll organise for an application for membership and a copy of BPN's Constitution to be sent to you.

11. BPN In-House News

The illustrious Geoff Turnbull, who has been BPN's Treasurer since December 2014 has sadly, more, recently resigned due to work and community commitments. Geoff who has steadfastly worked behind the scene for the past three years supporting BPN, will continue his work as an active member, however has stepped down in order to be able to focus on local community commitments and his role at the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development.

In addition, Darren Jenkins who joined the leadership group in December last year has recently resigned to concentrate his efforts on his work as a Barrister and seek nomination as a candidate in the City of Sydney Council election.

On behalf of us all, our sincere thank you to both Geoff and Darren for their contribution.

In the interim, discussions are underway with potential members to the leadership group which we hope to have news to you about very soon.

We would also like to thank everyone for your support. The year so far has been busy, like never before. It's also been challenging in terms of the resources, with some of our committee members ill and others working around the clock on BPN and to support specific campaigns.

Notwithstanding the reforms that are being rolled out, we know the pace of reviews and changes are not only difficult for BPN to sustain but also long standing environmental groups who have substantial resources. This has led to some of our backroom systems being behind which includes the collection of membership fees, which will shortly follow.

To this end we are hoping to increase the number of our volunteers, which position descriptions will shortly be advertised. This will include media and admin assistance along with the preparation of a monthly E-news edition.

12. Hot Gossip

With so many incredible stories to tell about groups in BPN, it's become too difficult to just stay with one story in each edition. In response, we've included three stories:

Byron Residents Group as part of a larger network of 14 local groups across the Shire, earlier this year joined forces to form a community alliance, which assessed their local Council. Using a report score card that adopted the five principals in the Community Charter for Good Planning, the verdict handed down to Council was a massive fail.

Highlighting their dissatisfaction with councils procedures and proliferation of unchecked development, the report card assessed 20 key issues over the past year, against the Charter's key principals, with the outcome highlighting the need to put 'community and the environment first'. Since then, the alliance is continuing to use the Charter as its reference point for further score cards.

To keep abreast of the latest news: <https://www.facebook.com/ByronResidentsGroup/?fref=nf>

In less than four months, **Saving Sydneys Trees** has attracted a base of 6,000 (genuine) Likes on its Facebook page. Established in response to the sound of the first chain saws at 2am just after New Year felling some of Sydney's most historic trees along Anzac Parade and Alison Road, the group attracted 1,000 supporters in its first week on Facebook.

Today the group has a supporter base of about 10,000 people, with roadside Vigils used successfully to build a large supporter base and promote their rallies. Focused on highlighting the unnecessary removal of nearly 600 of Sydneys Significant Trees as a consequence of poor planning decisions and governance, the group's longer term aim is to enable legal challenge for critical infrastructure projects and ensure best practice design outcomes to stop the loss of existing urban canopy cover. To find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/savingsydneystrees/>

In just over a year, **North Parramatta Residents Action Group** has established an amazing array of alliances in its bid to stop Urban Growth's urban renewal redevelopment plans for the historic Fleet Street precinct and surrounds. Working on putting together a viable and alternate solution to stop the 39 ha heritage precinct from being parcelled and sold off into high rise blocks, the group's vision is to turn the area into one of Australia's leading arts and cultural precinct.

Winning over the support of the local chamber of commerce, political parties and inner city groups such as Save the Powerhouse, a green ban is also in place following support from the CFMEU. The group's next event is a Rally through the streets of Parramatta on 5 June, which you are invited to attend. To find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/events/871921056250532/>

Once again thank you for your support, and we hope to see you at BPN's upcoming event on the 1 June.

From all of us at Better Planning Network